

Dance Index

a new magazine devoted to dancing





Jules Cheret : Poster, 1893

Dance Index

a new magazine devoted to dancing

Editors

BAIRD HASTINGS
LINCOLN KIRSTEIN
PAUL MAGRIEL

Vol. I. No. 3. March 1942

Comment

The fame of Loie Fuller,* dancer, actress, and dabbler in the sciences, can rest on the fact that she was the first to utilize, if not to invent, many features of modern stage-lighting. Indirect cross-beams and variations of direct electrical illumination were characteristic features of her earliest performances. She anticipated one of the most spectacular of modern inventions — Luminescence, the use of cold light by luminous salts. The chief practical uses of her innovations are today found outside the theatre, outlining the entrance of air-raid shelters, and the staged lighting of Nazi party meetings. As dancer, she inaugurated, before other more widely remembered artists, a dramatization of emotion through natural or at least simple body movements, to the background of important music. Yet all of this is almost forgotten today. However, even a cursory glance at the transformation of a precocious temperance-lecturer and 'bit' actress to a leader in the theatrical world shows us she was not so simple as some have pictured, nor may she be ignored.

In her field, Fuller made concrete contributions as important as the influential theories of Gordon Craig and Adolph Appia. These men were chiefly preoccupied with the architectural *scale* of theatre decoration, restoring to the stage a kind of dynamics, or heroic stylization which the static naturalism of the late nineteenth century had obliterated. Naive, largely unconscious of the implications of her discoveries, Fuller was interested neither in

paint nor in architecture, but in light. Yet Max Reinhardt's glass floor for "The Miracle," and his fingers of light picking out solo actors in mass spectacles at the Grosses Schauspielhaus during the early days of the Weimar Republic, connects Loie with the post-Wagnerian decor of a Nuremberg Congress, when, transfixed on the grid of searchlights, the new Siegfried howls.

Manifestations from her immediate person were visible as late as 1925 when she appeared on the broad stairs of the Grand Palais at the exposition of Decorative Arts in Paris, to dance "The Sea." Here she was seen by a young painter and stage designer, recently out of Russia via Berlin, and about to collaborate with the Diaghilev Ballet. Pavel Tchelitchew in his *Ode* (1928), *Errante* (1933), *St. Francis* (1938) and *Balustrade* (1941), has continually manipulated the translucent, the luminous, the actual presence of light projected on shifting stuffs. André Levinson first noticed the closeness of *Errante* to Loie Fuller's ideas. Recently, in decor for Giraudoux' *Ondine*, produced by Louis Jouvet, now on tour in South America, Tchelitchew used the developed gamut of electrical and plastic possibilities which Fuller had provisioned. Only now, substantial marble, under the influence of his wonderful lights turned to water, stone became fire, and the very stage floor itself, impermanent air.

* The cover montage, by Joseph Cornell, is from a film made in Paris (1905) of her *Five Dances*. These strips are made from an original hand-colored 35 mm. print in Mr. Cornell's possession.

Subscription: 25c a copy; \$2.50 by the year

Copyright 1942, Dance Index — Ballet Caravan, Inc. 637 Madison Avenue, New York City

Loie Fuller

The Fairy of Light

by
Clare de Morinni

What a long journey it would be from the Fullersburg, Illinois tavern where Marie Louise Fuller was born. It was an unusually cold winter, and as her parents lived on an isolated farm, they went into town and requisitioned the only room possessing a stove capable of throwing out heat, which happened to be the bar-room. This, according to Loie herself, was in 1870. The Dictionary of American Biography unchivalrously gives her 1862. In either case, she maintained she came into the world with a cold she never got rid of.

The initial chapters of her career are typical of any American minor actress of the epoch. At six weeks she appeared in a dance-hall in a minor sleeping role. Her father was in demand as a fiddler; there was a surprise-party in town and no one with whom to leave baby, so Loie was brought along. When but two and a half, this child whose early idols were such feminists as Louisa M. Alcott, Frances Willard and Carrie Nation, was carried to the Chicago Progressive Lyceum. Quite on her own she decided to 'speak a piece,' and before her mother could stop her, she was on the platform reciting "Mary Had a Little Lamb." She contrived an effective exit by sliding down the steps, her copper-nailed shoes stuck straight out in front. At four, she made her debut in a Chicago stock company, playing Little Reginald in 'Was She Right?' Hereafter, her acting career often called for the impersonation of a boy, which may have commenced from accident but long continued through choice. This had an important effect on her psychological development.

The year following, 1875, finds her a temperance lecturer. She practised the horrible-example method. Having hunted up the town drunkard and placed him on the platform, she delivered her sermon with this constant reminder as her text. She next toured as a Shakespearian 'reader,' only to return to New

York to join the Felix Vincent company. In 1878, H. T. Hinds put on a new production of Dion Boucicault's popular favorite, "The Shaughraun," and Loie took a small part. The early eighties saw her in Frank May's stock company, then with Dave Henderson's Imperial Burlesque. She produced "Larks," a play which she wrote herself, and in 1883 toured the circuit with Buffalo Bill. Although she later spoke enthusiastically about her experience with the circus, she may not have felt the same about it at the time; for abruptly in 1884, she retired, as she said, 'to study music,' and a year later she appeared in Chicago at Hooley's Opera House in "Faust," singing as well in the Chicago Music Festival.

She returned to the stage for "Our Irish Visitors," "Turned Up" and "Humbug," in 1886, in all of which she had boys' roles. She was in Nat Goodwin's "Little Jack Sheppard" at the Bijou in New York, receiving seventy-five dollars a week. In 1887, Goodwin produced three plays in which she appeared, "The Big Pony," "Aladdin" (in which Loie took the lead), and Rider Haggard's "She." It is said that she was assigned the role of Ustane, the slave girl, not because of any unusual histrionic capacity, but simply because she was willing to roll down the steps of a property pyramid further and harder for the ten dollars per performance than anyone else. The following year found her back in vaudeville.

Although such experiences would scarcely lead one to believe that Loie Fuller was on the verge of rivalling Sarah Bernhardt she had gained enough experience as a trouper to play *Camille* once, almost by chance, on just four hours' notice. Then there was a sudden change. She had met a Colonel William Hays, nephew of Rutherford B. Hayes, during the run of "Little Jack Sheppard." He

had been kind to her, lending her money to meet expenses on her Florida farm, and again to take her troupe to the West Indies. This, she was accustomed later to refer to as her 'South American Tour.' She did, however, play Havana. As a result of these enterprises she owed Hays \$9,200.00, and in May of 1889 they signed the following contract: "I, William B. Hays, in the presence of God, do take Loie Fuller for my lawful wife."

Despite the fact there was never a church ceremony, and it was shown in the subsequent trial they never lived together, Hays does not seem to have lost interest in his peculiar bride; he followed her to London where he admitted to being her husband, and engaged to pay all her expenses. This first stay in 1889 was a short one, for although she enjoyed a personal success, her vehicle "Caprice" did not, and she soon returned to New York for Hoyt's "Trip to Chinatown" and "Quack, M.D." It was then, almost accidentally, that her career as dancer and experimenter in light began.

Rehearsing one of the scenes for "Quack, M.D." at the Harlem Opera House, she desired an effect of mysterious, hypnotic attraction. Hunting through her wardrobe for a suitable costume, she came on a small box, containing a present from an Indian army officer. On opening it, she found a filmy, voluminous silk skirt. The officer had told her it was once ordered for the D'Oyly Carte Gilbert and Sullivan Company, though never used. She drew it out, put it on, and "gently, almost religiously" waved about her its translucent folds. She was standing before a mirror, the sun-light falling through the yellow blinds of the window behind her, illuminating the gauzy material, and as the silk billowed, it seemed like light itself. She describes the first performance of "Quack, M.D.":

My robe was so long that I was continually stepping upon it, and mechanically I held it up with both hands and raised my arms aloft, all the while that I continued to flit around the stage like a winged spirit.

There was a sudden exclamation from the house:

'It's a butterfly! A Butterfly!'

I turned on my steps, running from one end of the stage to the other, and a second exclamation followed:

'It's an orchid!'

This she tells us, was the origin of her Skirt Dance. But the New York "Town Tattle" of June 3, 1893, supplies quite another tale. It claims that in 1891, appearing in Holyoke, Massachusetts, she was scheduled for a number in skin-tights. But finding her audience so tiny, she scarcely bothered

to take off her ordinary street skirt, and performed in it, flouncing about the stage, so inventing her Serpentine. In any case, Loie Fuller's Skirt Dance was by no means the first of its genre. It had been long popularly developed in English music-halls from a compromise of a classic ballet variation and the Lancashire Clog, or 'step dance.' Its leading exponent was Kate Vaughan, who first appeared as a skirt-dancer in a "Ballet of the Furies" at the Holborn Theatre in 1873. The original skirt dance degenerated into a romp because Kate Vaughan's imitators were not as precisely trained in the academic ballet as she. Fuller's early "Widow Dance" in which she wore a black skirt and white powdered wig may well have been an echo, however far removed, from Vaughan's original role as the Spirit of Darkness, for which her costume was a black skirt profusely trimmed with gold.

That play "Quack, M.D." was a failure too, never coming any closer to Broadway than Brooklyn. But Loie's dance seen in it was such a great success that she decided forthwith to abandon her career of actress for that of a dancer. This was not so easily done. She was an actress in the minds of all the New York managers she knew, and they refused to consider her as anything else. She suffered a long struggle before the director of the Casino Theatre finally gave her a grudging audition. For him she danced on an empty stage lit by one lone gas jet, without music. But when she reached its climax and fell, a heap of rippling silk at his feet, he decided she had something. He told her to repeat the number, this time accompanying her himself on the piano with a popular piece of the day, Giller's *Loin du Bal*. When she had finished, it was he who christened her creation, "The Serpentine Dance."

She was engaged to appear as a feature act in still another play, a kind of extravaganza labelled "Uncle Celestin," and began at once to develop her dances, for which she had classified "twelve characteristic motions." She gave no name to these dances, only numbers: dance One was to be given under a blue light, dance Two under red, Three under yellow, and so on. She had always intended to use lanterns of colored glass, but now she became pre-occupied with their proper placing relative to her dance movements, arranging rays of light that projected across a darkened stage, falling upon her swirling silks in a novel and effective way. When "Uncle Celestin" was produced at the Casino, her act was the hit of the evening, but her name had been omitted from the program. Her manager paid



Loie Fuller in early stock

her so little since he anticipated if she were a success she must certainly leave him, so he had trained a chorus girl to take her place, thus avoiding building up any expensive personal publicity. Nevertheless, a good friend of hers, Marshall Wilder, the humorist, was in the audience, and noticing the omission, climbed onto his seat, shouting her name to the applauding public. This was more effective than any printed announcement in a program, for with the give-the-little-girl-a-hand spirit of our audiences, she received an ovation — and also the flattery of immediate imitation. The Serpentine spread like wild-fire and its American originator sometimes had difficulty in convincing managers she was not an imitation of herself. But she held one important element the other dancers lacked, no

matter how proficient their capers might be, and that was her lighting effects. In this, she definitely launched a novelty. As a matter of fact, except for a brief infantile episode, she had fewer than half a dozen dancing lessons in her whole life. In order to minimize the danger of having her effects stolen, which they continually were, she tried to maintain a band of loyal electricians, with her brother Burt as their chief.

By this time not only ambition, but restlessness too, was working in the active brain behind Loie's somewhat pudgy little face. That, plus a recent painful experience, combined to turn her thoughts away from America, and to try her luck in Europe. For, while appearing in "Uncle Celestin" in Philadelphia in 1892, Loie Fuller filed suit against her husband, Hays, accusing him of bigamy; she had discovered his previous wife, Amelia, was by no means divorced from him. Loie won despite Hays' allegation that her document of proof was a forgery, and her suit blackmail. The case was settled out of court for ten thousand dollars, but a second charge of perjury landed Hays in Sing Sing.

How humiliating all this had been may be guessed by an account printed in the "Spirit of the Times," in 1892, which commented on Loie's "double success": her dancing at the Casino, and the publication of an apology and statement by Hays:

Loie Fuller is free from all taint of immorality. I never had any indecent or nude picture of Loie Fuller, nor have I seen one, nor do I believe that any such picture has ever been taken.

The newspaper added, of its own accord, "This certificate ought to be framed in gold and worn as a brooch."

The reaction drove her to Europe and something better than a brooch. She desired Paris, but chance offered Berlin. She took a second-class boat to Hamburg, dancing on board. Her German engagement was successful, but an unscrupulous manager let her down badly. However, it was a step toward her goal. Eventually she reached France, even though obliged to dance her way there in a traveling circus, appearing between an elephant act and a team of jugglers. An old trouper could take that in her stride.

Once in Paris, she tried for the top, addressing herself directly to the Opéra, but its management was unimpressed. She turned on her heel, and sought the Folies Bergère, either indifferent to, or unconscious of the fact that it was practically taboo in respectable artistic society. At the Folies she

found an imitator already performing, but somehow persuaded the director to take her on, and to everyone's surprise, made a tremendous hit.

One recalls Baudelaire's, "*J'ai vu parfois, au fond, d'un théâtre banal un être qui n'était que lumière, or et gaze.*"

Everybody has seen Loie Fuller and knows the novelty she has introduced upon the stage. Instead of the traditional dancer in tights and short muslin skirt, instead of the familiar but ever entertaining acrobatics, bounds, pirouettes, etc., in the even steady glare of the footlights, there appeared one evening at the back of the darkened stage, the indistinct form of a woman clothed in a confused mass of drapery. Suddenly a stream of light issued apparently from the woman herself, while around her the folds of gauze rose and fell in phosphorescent waves, which seemed to have assumed, one knew not how, a subtle materiality, taking the form of a golden drinking cup, a magnificent lily, or a huge glistening moth, wandering in obscurity.*

The next few months were unquestionably the most important in her career. "*La Belle Americaine*" became a popular idol of Paris, to such an extent that the hitherto questionable Folies Bergère was transformed into an artistic shrine, even women and children flocking to see her in the wake of writers, artists and sculptors. The enthusiasm of her audiences at over three hundred consecutive performances, was expressed with characteristic Parisian exuberance. One evening the entire house was bought up by students, and literally bushels of violets were thrown onto the stage. It took fully five minutes to pick them up. She was not even denied the traditional "carriage drawn by admirers" so dear to ranking prima donnas.

Her spectacular success caused no relaxation in her efforts. She worked night and day inventing new dances and experimenting with novel lighting effects. No longer numbered, these dances were now called *Danse Blanche*, *Danse Fleur*, and *Bon Soir*. She was frequently so exhausted at the end of an evening, for her own part of the program was forty minutes of continuous dancing, that she had to be carried from the stage to her tiny apartment back of the theatre, where she was living with her mother, a chronic invalid to whom she had always been exaggeratedly devoted. As frequently as possible, she wore her original D'Oyly Carte dress, for which she had a sentimental and almost superstitious feeling. Whenever she put it on, the pleats between her fingers "seemed alive" to her. One of her new dances, a "Fire Dance," was particularly popular,

because of the effects of flame and smoke produced by dancing on a pane of glass lighted from beneath. This innovation, a pioneer realization of indirect lighting, was acclaimed as an effect "greater than Bayreuth," and was the direct inspiration for the Toulouse-Lautrec lithograph.

This is the moment when simple Loie Fuller emerged as "*La Loie*." Mantelet painted her, Jules Cheret drew a poster of her, and more flattering still was Lautrec's lithograph. This was limited to fifty copies, and although drawn off in black and white only, was hand-colored by the artist, who used a wad of cotton to apply the color, afterwards powdering the damp plate with gold dust. This lithograph (Delteil cat. no. 39), is reproduced in color as cover of the monograph "*Henri de Toulouse Lautrec. 1864-1901*" by Maurice Joyant (Paris, 1926). The few lines of his crayon indicating her full-blown face — a mask of the epoch, so close to Oscar Wilde's as almost to be his sister — is one more glimpse of Lautrec's mastery in characterization. The plate is rose and gray, ashes of roses adored in Whistler's *Arrangements* and *Nocturnes*, and Charles Conder's fans. Lautrec painted a *Ballet de Papa Chrysanthème* in 1892 (Museum of Albi. no. 26). We recall the sunflower and the chrysanthemum were *par excellence* the blossoms of the fin de siècle. Pierre Louy's great popular success was "*Mme. Chrysanthème*," and there was the Belasco-Puccini "*Madama Butterfly*" and Mascagni's "*Iris*" as well. Joyant describes this ballet as a *Fantaisie japonaise et nautique*, given at the Nouveau Cirque in 1892. In the middle on a lotus leaf, the Etoile dances in veils, imitating *la Loie Fuller*. In a very free sketch of the same year, *Au Music Hall*, formerly in the collection of Yves Busser, "*La Loie* is standing, profile towards the left; yellow hair, surrounded by veils; in the background, at the right and above, the balcony of the hall."

But through it all, Loie Fuller was living quietly, "chastely," in her little Paris flat, with occasional trips to London. For, by a peculiar trick of fate, she, the "fairy of light," was earning only bare living expenses. All the surplus of her reputedly fabulous salary was going to pay off a broken Russian contract for which she had been sued. Her mother had been ill, and Loie turned back at the border.

At this time Loie had already surrounded herself with a group of young girls who also appeared with her, and to whom she was attached with extraordinary affection. Actually living in the house with her was a girl known as Gab who always dressed as

* *The Architectural Record*: March 1903.

a man, who stayed with her for eight years, and who was at least ten years younger. Loie's eccentric manner of life caused almost as much comment as her dancing. A somewhat ingenious tribute was her inclusion of a course entitled *foie gras de Poie: Loie Fuller*, at a dinner given by Paul Sescou, a photographer friend of Lautrec's.

In her experimentation with lights, color became more and more her preoccupation. Starting with a lamp on either side of the stage, the two throwing upon her a single color, she began to use more lamps, changing the colors. Then, through a happy accident, she discovered the value of blended lights. One night, a drunken electrician, instead of throwing upon her one color at a time, mixed them at random. She was furious, but the favorable reaction of her audience showed her there were possibilities of developing further spectacular effects. She began to arrange colors as if they fell on her through a prism. These new arrangements were effective, as the following account in the London "Sketch" (1900) bears witness:

The orgie of color was so wonderful as to leave objection mute. Light came from every side. La Loie danced upon glass, from which the vivid splendor of the headlights was reflected, while from the wings, stage and orchestra, wonderful luminous streams seemed to flow toward her. With the rhythm of the music the colors changed, and where white ruled before, there was a kaleidoscopic vision. Violet, orange, purple and mauve movements succeeded in rapid succession until a rich deep red dominated the dancer, and she became, for one brief moment, a living rose, with palpitating heart and flying leaves. Then the hues of the rainbow came from all sides, and ranged themselves upon the ever moving draperies. Every fold had its tint and scheme of color intensified by the surrounding darkness until the eye could scarcely bear to look. Just as the strain was becoming almost intolerable, the colors disappeared, there was a white flash of appalling brilliancy, and La Loie faded under diaphanous drapery.

If the effect on Fuller's spectators was almost intolerable, the strain on Loie was terrific. There were fourteen electricians to be directed for her "Fire Dance" alone. This she did with gestures, taps of her heel, and other signals worked out between them. She wrote of a first rehearsal:

A skilled electrician has to go ahead to cut the floor properly and to lay the wires. When this is done I can go to work. Sometimes I use ten lamps, sometimes sixteen, again twenty, and I have used as many as thirty-four, and it requires a skilled electrician to run each of them. . .

So it is not surprising that even her boundless energy began to flag. There were reports that she was ill, going blind, that her arms and legs were paralyzed. However, she managed to return to New York in triumph before a breakdown which, despite a consultation of doctors, resulting in an order for complete rest, was apparently of short duration, for she was soon dancing again.

Loie Fuller was completely an artist of her epoch. It is important to place her not only with creators in her own field, the theatre, but among her peers in the other visual arts, in order to realize her independent, perhaps unconscious, but nevertheless parallel attitude. From the haphazard, instinctive broken color impressionism of the series of Claude Monet's haystacks, springing from Delacroix's researches, emerged the "scientific" post-impressionism of Georges Seurat. This great artist's preoccupation with formal plastic composition was no less precise or impressive than his innovations in color. But, in spatial composition he was a classic extension of Piero and Poussin, and like Lautrec, an admirer of Hokusai and Utamaro, while in the disposition of color he was certainly a radical inventor. With the painters Paul Signac and Henri-Edmond Cross, he investigated the actual physics of light vibration. He studied Chevreul,* Helmholtz, Humbert de Superville, as well as the American Professors Henry of Princeton and Rood of Columbia. As Alfred Barr wrote in his catalogue to the First Loan Exhibition of The Museum of Modern Art (1929):

A few years earlier the Impressionists had taken hints from the theory of complementary reflexes, had painted purple shadows and broken up their surfaces into little dabs of more or less pure color. Seurat, the logician, found this method too inexact. He asserted that color in painting should consist only of "red and its complementary green, orange and blue, yellow and violet." He then proceeded to apply these six primary colors systemically in little round dots of equal size, thereby eliminating, theoretically at least, all trace of the personal "touch."

Seurat had, as far as we can find, no direct connection with Loie Fuller. Yet his *Parade* (1887-8), and particularly his *Chahut* (1889-90), give us perfectly the atmosphere of the Parisian music halls in which Loie appeared, and his puffy ravishing *Poudreuse* (1886) might almost be her portrait. In different fields, their interests were close. Seurat consciously, Fuller instinctively (in spite of her lip-service to science) were using the results of their

* *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs et de l'assortiment des objets coloriés.*

century's research. Not since the Italian Renaissance anatomists and masters of aerial perspective had the exact sciences so importantly contributed to the visual arts.

Her brief appearance at Koster and Bial's Music Hall in New York in 1896, after four years absence in Paris, was nothing short of sensational. Her salary was the largest ever paid in vaudeville up to then; sixty-seven dollars more per week than the chanteuse Yvette Guilbert, and double that of opulent Lillian Russell. Something of the transformation of the audience which had taken place in the Folies Bergère now occurred in New York, where the newspapers suggested Saturday Matinees for Ladies, an unheard of innovation, in order that the feminine portion of New York society might watch Loie in her four dances, *La Nuit*, *Le Feu*, *Le Firmament*, *Le Lys du Nile*, without the "protection" of male escorts.

She did not stay long in New York, and in fact, most of her subsequent trips were more or less flying visits; highly paid vaudeville engagements, in addition to a somewhat gaudy appearance at the St. Nicholas Rink, until she returned in 1909, not as vaudeville performer, but as an artist making a bid for the same artistic and social recognition she received in Paris.

Her acquaintance with influential Frenchmen of her time was more than a friendship. It was a collaboration. She must have inspired the creators of *l'art nouveau*. Emile Gallé, France's best known artisan in glass, the predecessor of Lalique, sought her new colors; and she indirectly influenced furniture and architecture as well. Henri Sauvage's beautiful small theatre* for her at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900 is an example. In its exquisite salle she danced and presented authentic Japanese actors and dancers of the Hanako Company, headed by Sada Yacco; and here young Ruth St. Denis was deeply moved by her. The extraordinary energy of this pug-nosed Chicagoan was nowhere more evident than in the building of her theatre, which was accomplished in one-third the time expected. Loie was much affected by the Japanese, and in the spiritual company of Whistler and Degas, composed works imitating them.

L'Art Nouveau came as a reaction against the foul taste of the July Monarchy, the bastard pastiche of decorative fragments from the epoch of Henri Trois, Louis Quinze, or the rococo bibelots prized by the brothers de Goncourt. Already Whistler in



The Original Serpentine, 1891

London had painted his Peacock Room. The iridescent plumage of the peacock's tail was a badge for the movement which worshipped the accidental iridescence of a film of oil freely spread over water, the running glazes of Chinese jars, glass vases studded with insect wings, the tie-and-dye scarves offered by the house of Liberty, Fortuny dresses with all their thousand pleatings, Tiffany gold-shot lamps and stained bubble-glass, Lalique snakes, "natural" flowered forms, and arts-and-craft jewelry.

Around 1894, the Belgian architect, van de Velde, was the apostle of the new ideas, which were partly motivated by flamboyant Gothic ornament, Japanese stylization and observation of vegetative forms. In his small house in a Brussels suburb, he commanded an informal guild of artisans to execute his own designs. Specialists in tapestries, faience, metal-work, murals and cabinet-making evolved a "natural" style. And turquoise and opal, the glowing browns and ash blues smouldering with light, the fiery

* The manuscript documents concerning its building are in the Museum of Modern Art's Dance Archives.



Paris : 1892

chiffons burning with lush chromatics were to be caught in yet another medium by Claude Debussy, to whose music Loie also later danced. *L'Art Nouveau* had as dominant principals, fluidity, impressionable elasticity, mercurial light with intense but ephemeral accents. The sweep of Loie's scarves caught in the wild race of iridescent lights playing madly on her filmy tempestuous folds, was a living monument to his new decorative style. Suitably enough, in one of her last public appearances at the Exposition of Decorative Arts held in Paris in 1925 she evoked 'the Sea.' Her whole approach to the stage, in fact, was always essentially decorative. She had little personality of her own, or physical enough, in one of her last public appearances at the attractiveness, or indeed, much emotion to project. Her body became grosser than Isadora's, far earlier in life. Her vaunted interest in religion seems superficial compared to Ruth St. Denis'. Her essential talent was for stage decoration, and this she realized through electricity and dancing.

One of her most interesting friendships was with Marie and Pierre Curie, the Nobel prize winners. Her acquaintance with the Curies commenced when she wrote them shortly after their discovery of radium. The reported fact that radium gave off a pale magical light fascinated her. Could she not use it for some new and sensational dance effect? Eve Curie tells of Loie's first naive letters requesting information; she wanted "butterfly wings of radium." The Curies gently explained this was not very practical, if only for the great expense involved. In reply she wrote "I have only one means of thanking you for having answered me. Let me dance one evening at your house . . ."

The Curies accepted her offer, but were more than a little astonished at the large troupe of electricians which arrived at their modest little house one morning, laden with theatrical projectors, festooned with strings of electric lights. Loie herself followed, and spent the entire afternoon arranging her effects. At night she returned, and before the

Curies, a few friends and their enchanted children, appeared in the narrow dining-room as "The Fairy of Light," surrounded by all the flowers and flames of the Folies Bergère. The Curie children never forgot that evening. And Eve Curie finishes her account of the dance by commenting "Loie had a delicate soul."

Other scientists became her intimates. Camille Flammarion, the celebrated astronomer, arranged for her admission to the French Astronomical Society, explained to her his theories of color as a physiological and psychological determinant on plants and humans, and became a warm admirer, calling her "the little star from the west."

Although the butterfly wings of radium were not practical, as a result of the friendship of the Curies, Loie began to experiment in a laboratory of her own with "fluorescent salts" extracted from the residue of pitchblende. These salts were supposed to derive their fluorescence from the influence of radium, but evidently were the result of "invisible light" playing on a sensitive mineral substance. Loie wrote later,

I suppose I am the only person who is known as a dancer but who has a personal preference for Science. It is the great scheme of my life. In Paris I have a laboratory where I employ six men. Every penny I earn goes to that. I do not save for my old age. I do not care what happens then. Everything goes to my Laboratory.

I have had some success, for I have invented a process for treating cloth with phosphorescent salts. Scientists in Paris worked with me, but it was reserved for me to discover that by striping a fabric with the stiff salts, I could produce a strong and beautiful glow at an expense of about \$600 a pound. Part of my hair was blown off in an explosion while I was experimenting in my laboratory, and it made a great sensation in the neighborhood. The people called me a witch, a sorciere. My hair will not all grow again, but I do not care.

This led to what she called her "Radium Dance," the first of luminous phosphorescent effects, with patterns on the costumes and scenery glowing from a blackened stage. Its importance was commented upon by such outstanding personalities as Jules Claretie, director of the Comédie Française, who wrote —

It is certain that new capacities are developing in theatrical art, and that Miss Loie Fuller will have been responsible for an important contribution. I should not venture to say how she has created her light effects, but she has actually been turned out by her landlord because of an explosion in her apparatus.

Auguste Rodin avowed "Loie Fuller is to my mind a woman of genius. She has recreated effects of light and background of great initial value."

Beside her special interest in lighting, her art was progressing along more and more aesthetic lines. The days of such vulgar accompaniment as *Loin du Bal* were over. Now was she dancing to the music of Gluck, Beethoven, Schumann, Delibes, Schubert's *Ave Maria*, Chopin's *Marche Funèbre*, and the *Peer Gynt* suite. She was the first to use the perennial "Spring Song" of Mendelssohn as a background later worn threadbare by Isadora Duncan, Maud Allan, Gertrude Hoffman and Ruth St. Denis. She also planned three biblical numbers, and in addition to her solo dancing was busy training her band of youthful "muses" to surround her in a "Ballet of Light." Isadora Duncan tells of having traveled with them for a time in 1902, only leaving when her room-mate, one affectionately known as Nursie, attempted to strangle her. Loie kept a strict maternal watch over her girls, many of whom came from society families. Three of the most famous were Sacchetto, an Italian ballerina from La Scala, Orchidée, "a child of nature," and Gertrude von Axen, "The perfect Grecian danseuse whose every motion was *raisonnée*." A tabloid once reported an imaginary dialogue between Gertrude and Loie. Von Axen was bemoaning the fact that her hair, blown in the wind, was scarcely Greek. Said sensible Loie: Listen, dearie, even the Greeks washed their hair once in a while.

Later, when Fuller returned to America in February of 1910, Orchidée and von Axen temporarily deserted her, attempting to give a performance on their own. Loie, not exactly a simpleton in legal matters, brought out an injunction against them.

It was this ballet she brought to New York and later to Boston in 1909, no longer into vaudeville houses, but into the more dignified atmosphere of the Opera. She played on double bills with such short operas as *Pagliacci* and *Cavaliere*. This proved to be an agitated visit marked by deputy sheriffs trying to collect bills from her at the Hoffman House, a verdict won against her in a suit brought by Maiden Lane Jewels, indignant letters from her to the "Times" complaining she'd been slandered, enormous difficulties with her fifty imported French electricians, to say nothing of her temperamental "muses." But her performances aroused excited comment and Loie was more in the public prints than ever before. The press was greatly struck by her absence of tights and the presence of bare feet. The New York "Dramatic Mirror"

inquired: "Is it necessary for Art's sake to make young girls appear without fleshings and in bare feet, with nought to shield their forms save a few folds of filmy gauze?" Loie replied: "It is an American monopoly to combine stage dancing with self-respect." She seized the occasion also to express abhorrence of the "hideous man-made lines of the corset."

When the reporters came to her hotel for an interview, they found her wandering about in a long gray dress, her blue eyes and white teeth flashing in her heavy face, by no means the aesthetic creature they had expected. "I was born to be a mother," she told them, somewhat to their surprise, "and to spend most of my days in the kitchen. But some strange perversity of fate led me to the motherhood of natural dancing. People have the idea that I am such an occult, mystical, ethereal sort of creature. Instead I am the personification of the practical."

Then she went on to tell them what had become almost a patter line about the three primary colors, the seven prismatic shapes, the four thousand color motifs of the Gobelin tapestries, all of which appeared in her dances. These interviews bristled with statistics: some of her costumes contained as much as five hundred yards of material, some were one hundred yards around the skirt, which was thrown up in swirls twenty feet high; she claimed that she could carry six thousand stage settings in a small handbag since the backgrounds could be infinitely varied by the use of light; and in one effect she used 1000 amperes of electricity, enough to light a town of thirty thousand souls.

Loie's 1909 visit to America came immediately after the sensational appearance of the Diaghilev Russian Ballet in Paris. She was quick to realize one of the chief reasons for their phenomenal success was their music. She had followed Duncan's example in using music by Handel, Johann Strauss, Rossini, Liszt, Mozart, and Rubinstein. Now Fuller turned to Debussy (*Nocturnes; Faune*), Purcell, Stravinsky (*Feu d'Artifice*), Scriabine (*Prometée*), Fauré, Moussourgsky, Wagner (*Ride of the Valkyrs*). She retained an early discovery, Gabriel Pierné, in her repertoire, and he later conducted for her.

When she returned to Paris after the American season, Loie entered upon what might be called her social-aesthetic period, in which she frequently appeared in public and privately for fashionable charities. Hitherto she had been a special pet of artists: Riviere, Houssin, Roche, Dumas Fils; now

she was taken up by the haute-monde. She had prominent social leaders as pupils, and also performed their amateur compositions. Among these polite composers were Armande, the Princesse de Polignac's niece, and the Countess de Chabannes-La Palice. She danced in the magnificent gardens of the Comte de Cahen-d'Anvers, just north of Paris. The grounds of his chateau de Champs were a miniature Versailles. Countless lights were hung in the long allées of clipped trees, the fountains leaped in the same fantasy of color that fell upon Loie as she whirled on the shallow stone terrace.

She danced also for the Comtesse de Galiffet, in the garden of her town house, and was the great attraction of fashionable fêtes at Trouville and those of the Marquise de Pomerou at Deauville. Her "muses" enchanted in a veil *danse de Diane*, and by the time it was finished they'd done with their veils. It was impossible to be more *en vue*. Her most curious association was with Prince and Princess Troubetskoi. He was the cousin of Pierre Troubetskoi, the sculptor. The Princess was one of her pupils, but the Prince had in mind even more interesting collaborations. The family had a fine estate at Fontainebleau, where he indulged his humane fantasies with Slavic earnestness. He had a pack of wolves, of the best Siberian breed, and wanted to train them to dance to the sound of a shepherd's pipe. Loie, who never lacked courage, was willing to share the experiment, and apparently got along famously with the wolves. Then he proposed an even more difficult problem; the Prince tried to convert his wolves to his own ardent cult of vegetarianism. He explained, while slipping between the teeth of a wolf a bread ball flavored with something that resembled meat juice, that to eat beef is a sin against love. "You kill a cow, but a bull loves a cow. . . Why if I ate beef, I could not look the Princess in the face."

It was during this period, before the first World War, that Loie met the Princesse Royale of Roumania, later to become Queen Marie. It was not strange that a friendship should develop between them. They both loved veils about the brow, floating scarves, color, mysticism, young protégés, and publicity. When Loie first danced in Bucharest in 1901, the Princess sent her children to see her, and the eldest, who strongly resembled her grandmother, Queen Victoria, could be heard in the Royal Box expressing her enthusiasm and contradicting her sister, who said that Loie was a butterfly, by insisting that no, she was an angel.



Les serpents.



La corolle.



L'Espagnol.



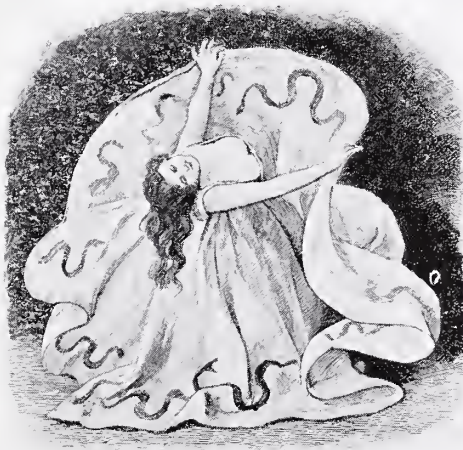
Les fleurs.



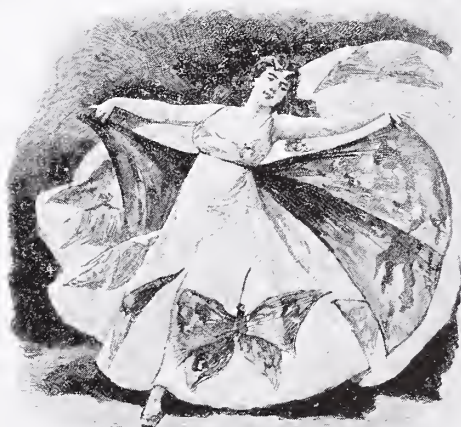
L'Étoile.



Au cœur.



Les serpents.



When the Queen came to America in 1926, partly for the sake of Roumanian charities and partly for the sake of "The Saturday Evening Post," this long friendship came to its spectacular end. The story of her trip to America in 1926 is more fantastic than choreographic. She and the Queen and a Mrs. C. C. Calhoun were involved in plans for a "Mothers Memorial Foundation," which they induced Mayor Walker, a Harriman and a Vanderbilt, as well as other prominent society ladies, to sponsor, to the extent of some sixty thousand dollars. Their avowed purpose, among others, was to create an Acropolis to Womanhood. To accomplish this modest end Loie presented the Queen's ballet *Le Lys de la Vie*, already filmed in Paris (with René Clair in a bit part) in 1920. (Loie had made two or three remarkable pioneer films for Pathé in 1905, with slow motion, shadows, negative printing, etc.) However, this ballet enjoyed no success either in New York or at the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial, at which performance the Queen was ensconced in a box that did not even face the stage. The New York proceeds were attached for three thousand dollars, while Loie got her own cut of \$8,500.00, half of what they were alleged to be. There were, needless to say, innumerable scandalous rumors concerning the Queen and the dancer. Innocently or not, the two were involved in one of the more genteel rackets of the decade. It also had little to do with personal publicity or prestige, as such. It was a simple device for obtaining easy money. Meanwhile, Loie was shadowed by the Roumanian Consul, Djuvara, in charge of the Queen's progress through our States, who feared the influence of the American over the Roumanian Crown. Loie boarded the Royal train in Spokane, but finally left it in Denver. The exact cause of her final abrupt departure was never disclosed; but the rumor was allowed to circulate that the Queen was displeased with Loie's attempt to bring about a reconciliation between herself and her son Carol.

The first great War had found Loie in Neuilly, surrounded by her muses, her oriental jars, shaded lights, crinkly glass and iridescent scarves. Her unbounded energy threw her at once into war work, for which she received military decorations not only from France, but also from Belgium and Roumania. She was back and forth between France and America, campaigning for war charities, organizing entertainments for the soldiers. In 1915 she was in San Francisco, where for a time she had her own theatre, and was interested in founding a Rodin museum. This project eventually grew into the

Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco, erected by Mrs. Adolph Spreckles in memory of the California soldiers killed in the last war.

Loie was frequently at the front in connection with her army entertaining. In 1919 a reporter on the Detroit "News," writing of his own war experiences, says of her — "At one stage she drew us all in close around the table while she confided to us in a voice that could not be heard more than twenty feet away (her usual speaking voice fills the room) that the Germans have only to cover their Zeppelins with black velvet to make them quite invincible."

Following the war, her own professional appearances were more and more infrequent, though wherever she appeared she was sponsored by the cream of Parisian society. She continued to direct her school, produced a "Hell Fire" scene for the Opéra performances of Berlioz' "Damnation of Faust," and presented the "Tragedy of Salome" to music of Florent Schmitt. It was in 1893 she had first danced Salome. She also organized tours for her pupils.

The development of moving pictures drew her back to her laboratory and to experimental science, and before long she had worked out new silhouette and shadow effects based on cinema technique, particularly the *cinema en relief*. In this, lights were arranged in such a way that the shadows of the invisible dancers seemed to lean forward stereoscopically into the audience. Her last professional appearance was in this "Shadow Ballet" in London in 1927.

The ethical or religious note acquired from her early days as a temperance lecturer, was present throughout her life, and Anatole France was to comment upon it. But more fortunate than many actor-preachers, who can only express themselves by preaching, she could function in the rightful air of her theatre. In a long stage career, one of her most remarkable traits was a complete lack of professional jealousy. She helped Maud Allen, a struggling young pianist who wished to become a dancer, to the extent of substituting her on a Swiss tour already arranged for herself. Even more striking was her launching, in 1902, of Isadora Duncan in Berlin and Vienna.

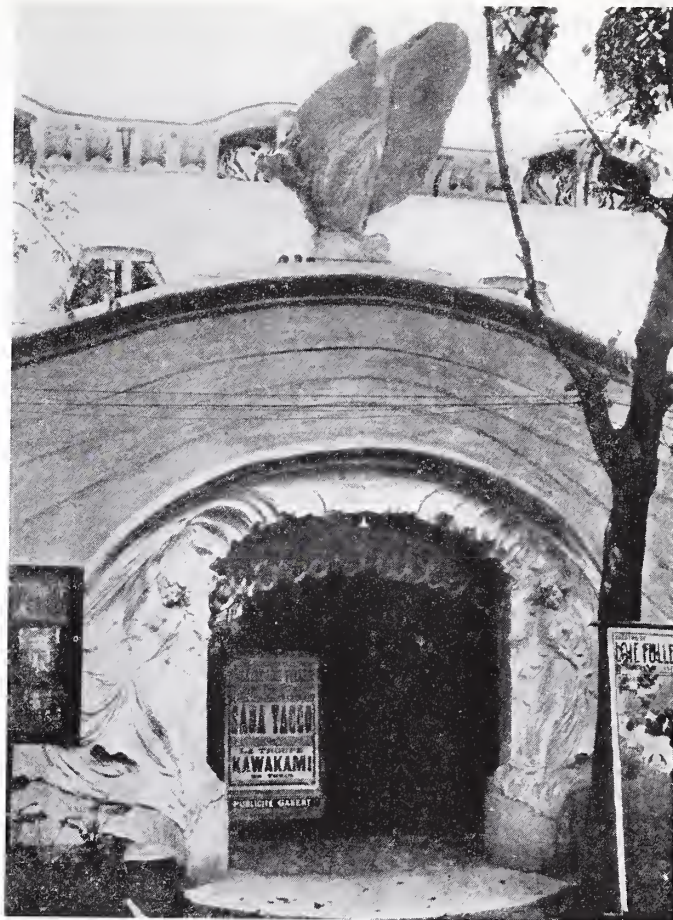
It was Madame Nevada, a singer, who had brought the two dancers together in 1900. To Isadora she said with some naiveté — "Sarah Bernhardt is such a great woman; what a pity, my dear, that she is not a good one. Now there is Loie Fuller, she is not only a great artist, but she is such a pure woman. Her name has never been connected

with any scandal . . . " Nevada took Isadora to see Loie dance and asked her for aid. Loie, as was her custom, responded with utmost generosity. She suggested that Isadora follow her to Berlin, then to Leipzig and Vienna. She put herself out tirelessly to make her known, introducing her to ambassadors, even to the fabled Princesse Metternich, and to others. She arranged auditions for the press, and for an audience of sculptors and painters. With really human kindness she pushed the cause of a rival in every way. On the other hand, Isadora was obviously impressed by her theatrical innovations. She writes in "My Life," after seeing Loie dance: "Before our very eyes she turned to many colored shining orchids, to a wavering flowing sea-flower and at length to a spiral like lily, all magic of Merlin, the sorcery of light, color, flowing form. What an extraordinary genius. . . She was one of the first original inspirations of light and changing color — she became light."

But it was perhaps inevitable that, as Isadora swept on her expansive exuberant way, she should quite leave Loie Fuller behind. This, at any rate, was Loie's impression, and she came to believe that Isadora even said, in answer to a question, "Loie Fuller? I've never met her." Whether this be true or not, it should be remembered that Loie, as well as helping Isadora, actually antedated her in the use of classic music for dance accompaniment, in her theory of spontaneous bodily movement to express emotion, and in her training and educating groups of young dancers to demonstrate her personal theories. It is true that when Isadora first saw these groups surrounding Loie she appears to have been a little alarmed by them and wondered what she was doing among these "beautiful but demented ladies."

It was only two years after her last appearance in London and her trip to America with Marie of Roumania that Loie Fuller died of pneumonia, January 1st, 1928, having been ill two days. Her dancing memory has stayed brighter in Europe than here, for ten years after her death there was still a troupe of Loie Fuller girls to be seen, not only in provincial towns, but from time to time in the capitals.

It is understandable that her style of dancing, fertile as it may have been, should have become demodé, but her contributions in lighting have spread and been developed. They were recognized in her life time as her outstanding achievement, and they were even more important than she or her commentators realized. Her detractors said she was no dancer, that she relied for her effects entirely on



Entrance to Loie Fuller's Theatre
Exposition Universelle : Architect : Sauvage.

light. But this was her own contention, for she referred to her dancers as "instruments of light."

Her fluorescent "salts," mixed with paint, that glowed on her whirling skirts were of the same family as the powder, mixed with paint, that is excited by ultra-violet light. Her employment of the excitant and the fluorescent material in the same container with the resulting "cold" light is the first radical departure in lighting since the discoveries of Edison half a century ago, and now, among other uses, indicates the entrances of air-raid shelters.

In Cocteau's 'Portrait: Souvenirs' there is a frightful little drawing of her, a symbol of her last days. Swathed in veils, her visage emerges, a bulldog with a black moustache. She wears tortoise-shell spectacles. And her memory will be inextricably connected with the Music-Hall, where vulgarity is somehow alchemized into *le vrai chic*. She is of the immortal gallery of Jane Avril and La Goulue, and of Barbette, the amazing Texan. They all had *chic*; the essence of their epoch inhabited their bodies. Their acts created style for their time.

Almanac

APRIL

1. La Meri lecture. Master Institute. New York City
Maria Gambarelli. West Point, Georgia
Carola Goya. Columbia, Missouri
4. Humphrey-Weidman company. Washington Irving High School. New York City
5. Dance Players. Washington, D. C.
6. Ballet Theatre opens week's engagement. Metropolitan Opera. New York City
Russian Soldier (Prokofiev-Fokine-Dobujinsky) on first program
Dance Players. Troy, New York
8. Ballet Theatre. *Pillar of Fire* (Schoenberg-Tudor-Mielziner)
Maria Gambarelli. Johnson City, Tennessee
Carola Goya. Milwaukee, Wisconsin
9. Carmelita Maracci. Ventura, California
10. Veen-Thimey. Boston, Massachusetts (also 11th)
Maria Gambarelli. Blacksburg, Virginia
Dance Players. Baltimore, Maryland (also 11th)
Carmelita Maracci. Los Angeles, California
12. Humphrey-Weidman company. Y.M.H.A. New York City (afternoon)
Antilliana. Y. M. H. A. New York City (evening)
13. Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo opens week's engagement. Metropolitan Opera. New York City
Cora Du Bois lecture: Personality Implications in the Dance of the Alor, Netherland
East Indies. 108 West 16th Street, New York City
Maria Gambarelli. Coatesville, Pennsylvania
14. Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. *St. Francis* (Hindemith-Massine-Tchelitchew)
15. Carmelita Maracci. Fresno, California
Maria Gambarelli. Kingston, New York
17. Carmelita Maracci. Los Angeles, California
18. Barton Mumaw. Washington Irving High School. New York City
21. Dance Players opens week's engagement. New York City. *Prairie* (del Joio-Loring)
Jinx (Britten-Christensen-Bockman) on first program
22. Atty Van den Berg. Carnegie Chamber Music Hall. New York City
23. Simone Michelle. Carnegie Chamber Music Hall. New York City
24. Humphrey-Weidman company. *With My Red Fires*. 108 West 16th Street, New York City (also 25, 26)

Exhibitions

The American Dance. Tulsa, Oklahoma. April 1-22.

Ballet: History, Art and Practice. Durham, New Hampshire. April 30-May 21.

Dancers in Movement: Photographs by Gjon Mili. Auditorium Gallery. Museum of Modern Art. New York City.

Dancing through Two Centuries: 1740-1940. Museum of the City of New York. February 10-May 3.